

monitoring report

Elections B&H '96

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THE B&H MEDIA WEEK IN REVIEW: 22 - 28 JULY

The spectre of Mostar is haunting B&H, nearly one-month after municipal elections which were touted as a test-run for Bosnia's nation-wide vote on September 14. The refusal by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) to join Mostar's reconstituted city council, ostensibly over voting irregularities, has clouded the future of the divided city, further damaged the credibility of the EU administration and highlighted the difficulties in implementing election results in contested regions.

The unresolved row in Mostar coincided with a spate of attacks on homes and places of worship throughout the region--in towns which were once and sometimes twice devastated by ethnic pogroms in 1992 and 1993. While the violence appeared to be locally-produced, it came at a time of intensifying vitriolics by politicians and the local media, who appear determined to seize upon voters' base emotions.

The Bosnian media's performance in Mostar was particularly lamentable, with broadcasters on both sides of the Neretva stoking the crisis through their own media war. As this bulletin has observed previously, fealty to the "national cause" often overrules a commitment to sound journalism, and such was the case this week in Mostar.

HTV Mostar showed itself even more extreme than some HDZ hard-liners, with the news presenter assuming the collective authority of the Croatian nation on the 28 July "Dnevnik:" "There cannot and will not be any more concessions," he said. "Games without borders" are over and we are fed up with the lies and betrayal of the Muslim side. There shall be no more flexibility and co-operation from our Croatian side."

RTV Mostar, which openly supports a unified city, struggled to hold the professional and moral high-ground but the station also unleashed emotive commentaries which emphasised the dangerous

political fallout from the Mostar crisis and put the blame solely on the Croatian side. A commentator warned on **RTV Mostar's** 26 July "Dnevnik: "The refusal by the Croatian side to accept the election results is threatening to set a dangerous precedent by which any losing party will refuse to accept the results and seek a new vote in the hope that they might win."

A more balanced, if opportunistic, presentation of events in Mostar was provided by RTV Srpska, which regularly portrays any discord within the federation as a sign of Bosnia's imminent and total disintegration. **RTV Srpska** took the unusual step of drawing on Sarajevo's *Oslobodjenje* newspaper to relay comments from Michael Steiner, Carl Bildt's deputy, who blamed Croatian truculence in Mostar on "mafia groups who control the city."

For its own part, **RTV Srpska** chose another contested Bosnian city, Brcko, as the setting for alarming reports about Republika Srpska's endangered fate.

Speaking as she began her first official campaign tour, Biljana Plavsic, RS's acting president, said she would insist that local elections in Brcko be held in September whether or not the town's status has been settled by international arbitration. "The consistent implementation of the Dayton Agreement will guarantee that this town remains in Republika Srpska," she said.

Inciting fear--either for one's security or economic livelihood-- has always been an effective campaign tool. Such a tactic was a key element in Bosnia's 1990 elections and appears to be re-emerging in 1996. As the following pages suggest, both politicians and some media throughout Bosnia are doing their best to inspire uncertainties that will reinforce the political status quo. Though the degree of manipulation varies, the ultimate aim remains constant.

Shouts Across the Neretva

The media war that erupted in Mostar over the HDZ's continuing boycott of the municipal council showed again the alacrity with which some broadcasters in Bosnia abandon journalistic scruples for the political trenches. As has been noted elsewhere in Bosnia, particularly in Tuzla, in times of crisis it is often journalists themselves who lead the charge in stoking fear, hatred and confusion.

Being a loyal servant of the HDZ, **Croatian Television Mostar (HTV Mostar)**, often serves as the mouthpiece for Mijo Brajkovic, the mayor of west Mostar. Yet while Brajkovic was calmly accepting the mandate for the new EU administrator, Sir Martin Garrod, **HTV Mostar** started the week with angry attacks on the EU. After fiercely criticising former administrators, the news presenter on **HTV Mostar's** 22 July "Dnevnik" said: "The politics of merging, assimilation, unification and mixing--excuse the expression, "Gemischt"--, is now sure to continue."

While Brajkovic suggested the EU could remain, he told Croat Radio Herceg-Bosna on 23 July that the logic underlining the municipal elections was dead. "In practical terms today is a new day in which the memorandum of understanding regarding Mostar is no longer valid."

The fiery speech by Croatian president Franjo Tudjman on 27 July, though short on concrete proposals, served to heighten the xenophobic hysteria among HDZ-controlled broadcasters in Mostar. Croatia, Tudjman warned, would not allow Europe to "impose on us solutions which would be either humiliating for a proud Croatia...or which would be contrary to the interests of the Croatian state and the Croatian national identity."

HTV Mostar's patriotic duty appears to extend even to giving free air time for local mobsters. Following charges by Michael Steiner, the German diplomat, that west Mostar was ruled by the Croatian mafia, HTV Mostar broadcast a statement by Vinko Martinovic, an underworld figure known by his *nom de guerre* of "Stela."

"We are witnessing," said Martinovic, "bad events in our Mostar, from fights and shootings to bomb attacks. By some strange logic, all of that has been connected with my name...I displayed great zeal in the war for our homeland against the aggressors and enemies of the Croatian people. I

am ready to fight for the fights of my nation again with the same zeal, especially for the rule of right and law." Martinovic did not say whether he might consider campaigning for public office.

RTV Mostar, which has shown professional restraint in its local coverage, also joined the fray with aggressive commentaries against the HDZ. The week started with an RTV commentary stating: "One can't really talk about a Mostar crisis. This is a crisis within the HDZ ranks, which HDZ officials try to thrust upon the whole city. This is miles away from the real situation." The RTV editor went on to accuse Kresimir Zubak, the Federation President who is also a Croat, of fomenting the political deadlock. "His aim is clear: elections in Mostar should be repeated until the HDZ wins."

By Thursday, when the HDZ announced it would not sign the "Joint Action" document extending EU administration, **RTV Mostar** launched another volley in its evening "Dnevnik." The news presenter, Senad Efica, suggested failure at the ballot box explained the HDZ boycott. "After the HDZ's unexpected defeat, they don't want to see Europe in Mostar anymore."

Different Time, Same Station

Four years ago, Serbian television propaganda helped provoke and justify war in the former Yugoslavia. With that job done, the station is turning its skills towards a new aim: shifting post-war power in Republika Srpska from Radovan Karadzic's Serb Democratic Party to its chief rival, the Socialist Party of RS (SPRS). Behind the Socialists stands, of course, Slobodan Milosevic, the man widely blamed for setting the violence in motion.

The influence of **Serbian TV (RTS)** is vast. Its signal reaches not only Serbs in Bosnia but also 200,000 Serb refugees in Serbia. And like Milosevic himself, the station seems to have metamorphosed itself from demon of war to angel of peace. Over the past two weeks it has broadcast reports critical of the Pale leadership and urging adherence to the Dayton accords. Though it gives ample voice to the RS opposition, **RTS** is simply using its old tricks in a new game.

Dayton requires the signatories and their broadcasting systems to give media access to all political parties in the Bosnian elections. But **RTS** makes no pretence of fairness, balance or

openness to divergent views. **RTS** began presenting political parties last week, but only the leftist coalition, "For Peace and Prosperity," lead by the Socialists. It gave Zivko Radisic, Socialist candidate for the Bosnian presidency, two evenings to outline the Socialists' positions. A flattering profile of Dr. N. Djuric, Socialist candidate for vice-president, seemed designed to impress Serb voters with the high quality of the Socialist candidates.

The station stresses the importance of the elections. It repeatedly urges Serbian refugees to vote. But for whom? The rest of its programming makes that clear. The nightly news programme "Dnevnik" follows the Socialists like the local football club. The programme sets aside time for the party every night. The Socialists share this privilege only with the Yugoslav Leftist Party, JUL. Last week the SDS wasn't even mentioned.

In other news coverage related to Bosnia, **SRT** usually limits its sources to those which will promote the Socialists and their positions. The 27 July "Dnevnik" celebrated "The Day of the Uprising in the Republika Srpska" with reports from Belgrade, Banja Luka and Mrakovica, the site of a major World War Two battle. Old Partisans figured prominently, pointing out the common struggle of the Serbian people against fascism. On the same day, Zoran Lilic, president of Yugoslavia, predicted that the Bosnian elections would bring "new people" onto the scene, "eliminate every extremism", and block all those who seek a "roundabout revision of the Dayton agreement" -- a clear attack on the SDS.

SRT revealed its colours well before the election campaign began. During the week of July 15-21, the station broadcast frequent attacks against the Pale leadership. On July 15 the Yugoslav foreign ministry accused the RS leadership of damaging Serb national interests by ignoring the deadline to appoint a Serb arbitrator for Brcko -- an accusation heard later that week. Also later that week, "Dnevnik" reported with obvious relief the resignation of Radovan Karadzic from the SDS leadership. On July 20, "Dnevnik" reported on a Socialist meeting in Gacko, in Herzegovina, where it was stated that "the people want to change those in power" and that "the Socialist Party is ready to take into its hands the destiny of the Serb people." **SRT** reports such claims uncritically and without any hint that others might disagree. Everyone is singing the same tune in **SRT's** "Dnevnik."

Last week's bulletin reported on **Croatian TV** and its labours on behalf of the Croatian Democratic Party in Herzegovina and central Bosnia. While **SRT** exalts the opposition, **Croatian TV** neglects to mention that any exists. But both are obviously engaged in the same line of work, and it is far from sound journalism. The two national television networks do the bidding of their masters in Zagreb and Belgrade. War has come and gone, but that much has not changed.

Where's Radovan?

Despite calls for defiance by some of the RS leadership, Radovan Karadzic has disappeared almost completely from **RTV Srpska's** radar-scope. Following Karadzic's written pledge to step down as SDS party leader and remove himself from public life, he has not been seen or heard on RS-controlled media. Even references to the former RS president and indicted war criminal are rare.

One exception came in **TV Pale's** 23 July "Novosti u 8." In a visit to Brcko, Biljana Plavsic, the acting RS president, paid honour to Karadzic for sacrificing his personal position for the good of the nation: "Dr Radovan Karadzic, not only on this occasion, but also ever since he came to power, has shown that he clearly understands the priorities--that his top priorities are the people and the state and only after that comes his presidency."

We are Experiencing Technical Difficulties

Though **TV Srpska** continues to offer air time to federation-based political parties, the broadcasts are becoming increasingly farcical. At the outset of a much-anticipated election programme which brought members of the SDA into the **TV Srpska** studios for the first time on 25 July, Mirsad Ceman, the SDA general-secretary, greeted his audience as follows: "Good evening and maksuz selam to all of those people for whom this means something." Ten minutes later, the **TV Srpska** moderator, Ruzica Kasapovic, suggested that Ceman's opening words had "discriminated against some viewers."

Ceman denied the charge and repeated his earlier greeting with a wry smile. The moderator then asked why Ceman had not used other "religious salutations" when addressing the **TV Srpska**

viewers. Just when Ceman began to offer an explanation, the programme was interrupted. After 40 seconds the word "Smetnje" (disturbance) appeared on the screen. After a 14-minute pause, **TV Srpska** began broadcasting music videos, without offering any explanation as to the fate of the election programme or Mr. Ceman.

The Kingfish's return

Fikret Abdic, one-time agricultural kingpin and leader of a bloody and failed rebellion in north-west Bosnia, announced last week his return to Bosnian politics from exile in Zagreb. Broadcasters in Croatia and Republika Srpska welcomed Abdic's promised return with extensive coverage of his 24 July press conference. Speaking in the name of his Democratic Union, which is banned in Bosnia, Abdic **told Croatian television** he would "guarantee good cooperation with federal partners and special relations with Republika Srpska."

Meanwhile, **Radio Bihac**, closely aligned with the ruling SDA, made no effort to conceal its hatred towards Abdic, whom it blames for plunging the region's Muslims into civil war. In its report, the station offered no direct quotations and repeatedly referred to Abdic as the "war criminal of the Cazin region."

Hit List

Hyde Park (**Studio 99**), Sarajevo's popular and free-wheeling radio call-in show, departed from its usual format last week. In response to what it called "pressure against the media", the show threw a satirical jab at the political establishment. It devoted its July 23 show to musical commentary that left few politicians and political institutions untouched.

The moderator dedicated "We Are Drunken Fools" to "parliamentary sessions". "Iran and 'Viva Communismo'" went out to the SDA, the Muslim party that governs Bosnia. And to former Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Salajdzic, President Alija Izetbegovic's chief rival among Muslim voters: "I Paint My Eyes Green."

"I'm Leaving Forever" was for Radovan Karadzic. Dedicated to his temporary successor, Biljana Plasic, who the program said suffered from a lack of experience with the opposite sex, was "That's The Way The Bosnians Kiss, Baby"

Here are some other examples:

To "Herceg-Bosna" and "the militant part of the HDZ": "A Dog Who Barks Doesn't Bite."
To the Social Democratic Party: "Where Have All the Years Gone?"
To IFOR: "Girls Walk on the Street"
To OSCE: "Repairman, Where are You?"
To the Federal Parliament: "I F*** Your Family"
To the Croat and Muslim leaders of the Federal government: "It's Hard for Me to Be With You."

In the spirit of Hyde Park, the moderator invited listeners to vote for their favorites. The winners were "What Would You Give to Be in My Place?" dedicated to Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, and "It's Better to be Drunk Than Old", for Nijaz Durakovic, head of the Party of Democratic Change.

Hyde Park is broadcast twice a week on **Studio 99**--when the telephones work. They have a habit of going dead in the middle of a show. Last week the announcer explained the problem and complained about "all the obstructions and pressure against **Studio 99** and the Hyde Park show".

The phones kept working

Press: Zmaj od Bosne

In Tuzla, the fortnightly *Zmaj od Bosne* continues to breathe fire for the ruling SDA. Number 120, published July 22, devoted seven of its 20 pages to election coverage. All of them promoted the SDA and either ignored or derided the opposition, in particular the ruling coalition of the USBD and SDP in the Tuzla government.

Some of the issue was given over completely to the SDA, without editorial intervention. On the second page, normally reserved for the editor's comments, *Zmaj* published in capital letters the names of all 89 SDA candidates in Tuzla. A two-page spread was given over to speeches of some of them.

In a commentary, *Zmaj's* editor, Vedad Spahic, attacked the election list of Tuzla's ruling coalition for being insufficiently Muslim. He said non-Muslims accounted for six of the first ten on the list and more than 40 percent overall.

"That's a greater percentage of non-Bosniaks than before the war in the municipality of Tuzla", he wrote. "That's too much for anyone who has even a little national consciousness, especially for

fighters who haven't quite forgotten how many of the Serbs and Croats have in the trenches with them." He went on to say that such a list "trampled on the dignity of the Bosniak people".

In contrast, Spahic praised the SDA's new slogan, "Tuzla for Tuzlans", which it borrowed from the ruling coalition in Tuzla. He said the SDA had eliminated rural people from its list and was demonstrating that it was a party of urban people and not country folk.

Zmaj also noted approvingly that the SDA dropped Izet Hadzic from its list after he was

jeered at during two separate commemorations of the Srebrenica massacres. Hadzic, it said, "showed himself an immature and naive politician". In contrast, Ejup Ganic, vice-president of the Bosnian Federation, "turned the mood of the masses in a desirable direction".

The election section also contained a full-page advertisement for the SDA. The advert displayed a crescent moon and the slogan "We know what the Croats will do. The Serbs will vote for themselves. What about you?" Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell in Zmaj what is advertising and what is not.

The Election Campaign in the Sarajevo Press

Oslobodjenje led the print media again this week with some 87 election-related stories. The newspaper gave added space to a growing number of voices opposed to the elections. Nijaz Durakovic, the SDP leader, told *Oslobodjenje*, "The elections will partition Bosnia," while Sefer Halilovic, head of the Bosnian Patriotic Party, said the people will again be deceived in the elections.

Vecernje novine and *Dnevni Avaz* sharply criticised the HDZ for boycotting the Mostar municipal council. In a commentary, *Dnevni Avaz* asked whether the "European Union has sanctions for the disobedient."

Period of coverage 22 - 28 July 1996

Dailies: *Oslobodjenje*, *Vecernje novine*, *Dnevni Avaz*.

Weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies: *Ljiljan*, *Slobodna Bosna*, *Hrvatska riječ*

title	issues	number of articles	number of articles per issue	most common formats
Oslobodjenje	7	87	11-19 articles	brief news items, reports, statement
Vecernje novine	5	46	8-10 articles	brief news items, statement, commentaries
Dnevni Avaz	6	60	8-12 articles	brief news items, reports, statement
Ljiljan	1	5		commentaries, interview, appeal
Slobodna Bosna	1	3		commentaries, story, political cartoon
Hrvatska riječ	1	5		commentaries, report, brief news items

She loves me, she loves me not...(3)

The table below shows the presence of political parties, their leaders and multi-party coalitions on the state-run broadcast media of both the Federation and Republika Srpska in the week 22-28 July. The column headed "total" indicates how many times each party or its leader appeared (directly or indirectly) or was mentioned in the central daily newscasts on both radio and television of **RTV B&H** and **SRT**.

Each party is awarded a score which represents the sum of every positive mention (+1), every neutral mention (0) and every negative mention (-1). The column headed " $\Sigma (+,-,0)$ " shows the results. The higher the number, the greater is that broadcaster's sympathy for or devotion to the party or politician. The lower the number, on the other hand, the more can the broadcaster be said to regard that party or its leader with disrespect or antipathy. The closer the total to zero, the more likely it is that the party receives equitable treatment by the broadcaster.

name of	RTV BiH	RTV Srpska
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party / coalition	total	$\Sigma (+,-,0)$	total	$\Sigma (+,-,0)$
<i>party</i>				
Stranka demokratske akcije	27	+6	18	-18
Srpska demokratska stranka (SZ)	-	-	19	+17
Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH	10	-2	9	-9
Srpska radikalna stranka RS	-	-	2	0
Srpska patriotska stranka SPAS	-	-	5	+2
Narodna stranka RS	-	-	3	+1
Srpska stranka Krajine	-	-	4	+1
Liberalna Stranka BiH	1	0	-	-
Liberalno bošnjačka organizacija	1	0	-	-
Bosanska stranka	4	0	-	-
Građanska demokratska stranka BiH	6	0	-	-
Muslimansko bošnjačka organizacija (1)	4	0	-	-
Hrvatska seljačka stranka BiH (1)	2	0	-	-
Unija bosanskohercegovačkih socijaldemokrata (1)	1	0	-	-
Socijal demokratska partija BiH (1)	2	0	-	-
Socijalistička partija RS (3)	-	-	2	0
Jugoslovenska levica RS (JUL) (3)	-	-	2	0
Socijalno-liberalna stranka RS (3)	-	-	2	0
Stranka nezavisnih socijal-demokrata RS (3)	-	-	2	0
Nova radnička partija	-	-	2	0
Stranka demokratskog centra Trebinje (3)	-	-	1	0
Seljačka radnička stranka Kozarska Dubice (2)	-	-	1	0
Demokratska stranka Bijeljina (2)	-	-	1	0
Nova radikalna stranka "Nikola Pašić" (2)	-	-	1	0
Otađbinska stranka Banja Luka (2)	-	-	1	0
Radikalni otađbinski front "Nikola Pašić"	-	-	1	+1
Stranka privrednog prosperiteta BiH	3	0	-	-
BH Patriotska stranka	2	0	-	-
Republikanska stranka BiH (1)	1	0	-	-
Stranka srpskog jedinstva	-	-	2	0
Srpska seljačka stranka RS	-	-	2	0
Saborna narodna stranka	-	-	1	0
<i>coalitions</i>				
Demokratski patriotski blok RS	-	-	2	0
Savez za mir i progres RS	-	-	3	-1
Združena lista za Bosnu i Hercegovinu	2	0	-	-

(1) Parties that belong to the coalition Zajednička lista za BiH

(2) Parties that belong to the coalition Demokratski partijski blok RS

(3) Parties that belong to the coalition Savez za mir i progres RS

The following media were monitored for this week's report: *Radio&TV Srpska, Radio&TV BiH, Radio Studio 99, NTV 99, NTV Hayat, TV Zenica, NTV Zetel, Radio Zenica, Radio Tuzla, TV TPK Tuzla, TV Tuzla, Radio Prijedor, Radio Bihac, Radio&TV Mostar, Hrvatska TV Mostar, Radio Herceg Bosna Mostar, Radi Krajina Banja Luka, TV Srbije, Hrvatska televizija, Oslobođenje, Večernje Novine, Dnevni Avaz, Ljiljan, Glas Srpski. Slobodna Bosna, Hrvatska riječ*

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MEDIA PLAN is Bosnia's first private company specialising in media research and analysis. Its central aim is to promote the renewal and development of the B&H media. The company has at its disposal an extensive data-base on the Bosnian media scene.

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